

**Notes from a New
Afrikan P.O.W.
Journal
book 4**



NOTES FROM A NEW AFRIKAN P.O.W. JOURNAL

Book Four

Vita Wa Watu
(People's War)

"To build a nation is to defend it;
to defend it is to build it."

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May 1980

VITA WA WATU

"PEOPLE'S WAR...IS ORGANIZING THE MASSES..."

People's War is what it is--right now--reaching more developed stages. Not only the dizzying glitter of the gun, but the organizing of "youth clubs," the recruitment of bloods who work as janitors in the buildings which house corporate headquarters and u.s. government agencies. It's cultivating bloods in medical school so they can one day soon work in our health centers, visit homes, teach the young and heal the wounds of our Bugs. It is cultivating bloods who work for the phone company.

"PEOPLE'S WAR IS IMPROVISATION AND MORE IMPROVISATION.
IT IS ORGANIZING THE MASSES..."

We go to the masses and improvise on the present reality. We go to the P.T.A. meetings guided by the **New Afrikan Declaration of Independence** and the **New Afrikan Creed**. Sisters and Brothers attend these meeting because they're concerned about the education and the future of their children. We must be there, too, and creatively search for and apply methods which direct that concern toward the effort to liberate the nation, educate all New Afrikan children, so that We can move into the future and realize the objectives and the principles of the New Society.

The party name need not be shouted, only a practice which is guided by the **IDEOLOGY**. Waging People's War is spreading by word and deed a systematic body of concepts about our lives and how We want to live them. It is to provide concrete examples of the way We must think about all things.

We don't need to wear badges--not all of us, or all the time--only to find imaginative ways to apply the **LINE**, to explain it, relate it to the reasons why our photographs are on drivers' licenses, why the new security system was installed in the housing projects. Relate the line to "inflation" and the "energy crisis," explain "genocide" as merely another way of saying **national oppression**.

Vita Wa Watu. It's about going to the churches because there are bloods there each Sunday who are receptive to our **THEORY**, who share our fundamental belief that We must have the power to control our own lives, and that the only way to obtain this power is by establishing beyond question the Republic of New Afrika.

People's War is the inspiration that turns **STRATEGY** into ways of feeding people. In the midst of war, people must eat. During some of the bloodiest campaigns of the Chinese, Vietnamese, Cuban, Angolan and other national liberation wars, millions of people still had to find ways to clothe and shelter themselves.

Pigs bombed rice paddies as the people planted and harvested. Children were in the schools learning the basics of math and the names of those who had fallen in defense of the nation's dignity, when the oppressive troops kicked down the doors on the pretext of "searching for terrorists."

There were traffic problems, preventing the masses from getting to their jobs on time, as tanks moved through the streets, soldiers built barricades at intersections, and armored personnel carriers blocked the entrances to factories.

Vita Wa Watu. More than the mere awareness of pain, more than the stimulation of undirected responses to a blinding repression. To win, We

gotta BUILD. People's War is a PLAN and has to be MADE. We must be artists: skilled and trained in the craft. It is finding the varied ways of explaining the process to the masses, so that they understand **THEIR** role in it, and do not see the Bug as a "messiah" who will save them without the expense of effort on their part.

"People's War is improvisation and more improvisation. It is organizing the masses around their realistic needs and moving them against whatever forces restrict their passage to power. I repeat: realistic, day-to-day needs should be the basis of organizing people and making them conscious of revolution..."

(George Jackson)

And, People's War is the **TAC Method**, the method of the Bug who carries out actions by choosing Targets based on Audience and Context.

A coherent political-military line selects the Target and Audience, based on the Context, i.e., the entire set of circumstances at any given place and time.

The TAC Method is a political-military instrument. It allows the armed action to perform its political function. Armed violence is chosen as to type and level, so that it fits the particular situation.

The TAC Method is based on probing assessments of various political, economic, military and social interrelationships, both before and after actions are carried out. In this way, actions adhere to the requirements of strategic planning, so that no action will cause the military situation at any given time to be intensified beyond a point unsustainable politically.

More concretely, the TAC Method is what We use in deciding whether it is more advantageous to the Movement to attack a liberal or the wardens of San Quentin or Soledad. We use the TAC Method in deciding when and how to avenge the deaths of the latest victims of the L.A.P.D., K.K.K., or N.Y.P.D. The TAC Method is employed in choosing and planning actions to aid striking transit workers; to help the people move against the genocidal conditions in our housing, medical care. It's used in choosing targets designed to demonstrate solidarity with the people of Azania, Palestine, Puerto Rico and Native Nations. We use the TAC Method in ways clearly designed to undermine the authority and prestige of those who rule, so that We can take another conscious step towards a free nation. We use this method as a means of having the pamphlet and the strategically-placed C-4 complement each other. People's War.

Vita Wa Watu, where small and repeated armed actions assist the struggles of the masses, arouse and mobilize them around issues of jobs, food, clothing, medical care and housing--all the time emphasizing that We can only truly have these needs realized with power, and that power comes through People's War, National Independence, and socialist development.

People's War, centrally directed, so that the action is properly chosen, and the agitation, education and organization is done before and after its occurrence, to glean from it the greatest possible overall political effect.

From One Generation To The Next,

Build To Win!
Free The Land!
Atiba Shanna
Feb., 15ADM

Debray Re-Visited

This is the first of several pamphlets which will address themselves to the general theme of Vita Wa Watu -- People's War.

In dealing with this general theme, We will attempt to point out similarities as well as differences; to establish continuity in the development of the conception, character and practice of People's Wars.

Our re-visit with Debray will lay our foundation and illumine our primary areas of concern.

Regis Debray's Revolution In the Revolution? was very popular among many bloods in the 1960's. But, generally, after reading it many of us came away with our minds locked on the "foco" as if it were a "purely military" formation.

Many of us mis-read Debray a decade ago. We came away with a one-sided perspective, a partial understanding which was reflected by our practice, and suffered by the Movement. But, they say, mistakes are gains in the wit, springboards to future success.

For this reason, We think it fitting to re-visit Debray and the book in question. We are, in many ways, involved in our own peculiar version of a "revolution in the revolution." We are beginning to increase the momentum and raise the level of the struggle for New Afrikan Independence. And, in the process, We are confronted by questions and obstacles similar to those addressed by Debray in the book. If, more than a decade ago, We had understood Debray's elaboration on the issues better, all indications are that our recent history would have been different, and so would our relationships in the present.

Of course, Debray's primary focus is upon Latin America and its peoples. But People's War has general laws, and these find expression not only in Latin America, but in New Afrika as well. We may also be able to learn from the specific laws which found expression not only in the wars waged by the Latin American peoples for liberation, but in other of the struggles We will examine in this series.

We will quote Debray extensively. He tends to lay particular emphasis on the Cuban Revolution, but our aim is not to "repeat" the Cuban nor any other revolution. We seek success for our own struggle for independence, and this goal will be aided if We can learn applicable lessons from the experience of others. Only one such lesson given us by Debray is the need to make a concrete analysis not only of one's own struggle but of the struggles of others, so that We don't view them out of their context.

Another lesson We learn from Debray stems from the sub-title of the book, **Armed Struggle and Political Struggle in Latin America**. Debray had attempted in this work to emphasize that, while armed actions are strategically necessary, alone they are not sufficient. He attempted to point out that not only was the initiation of "armed struggle" necessary, but that the "military foco" -- or whoever would assume the responsibilities of vanguard -- must assume political responsibilities: the practice of a politics not in conflict with reality, which recognizes that consciousness must be fed, and that the struggle is an integral whole.

I

When We meet Debray, he is concerned with helping us to free the present from the past, and he warns that this can be done only by systematic investigation. The purpose of this investigation is to become aware of a "new conception of guerrilla warfare" which differs fundamentally from presently held notions because, previously,

...One began by identifying the guerrilla struggle with insurrection because the archetype - 1917 - had taken this form, and because Lenin and later Stalin had developed several theoretical formulas based on it - formulas which have nothing to do with the present situation and which are periodically debated in vain, such as those which refer to conditions for the outbreak of an insurrection, meaning an immediate assault on the central power. But this disparity soon became evident. American guerrilla warfare was next virtually identified with Asian guerrilla warfare, since both are "irregular" wars of encirclement of cities from the countryside. This confusion is even more dangerous than the first.

The armed revolutionary struggle encounters specific conditions on each continent, in each country, but these are neither "natural" nor obvious. So true is this that in each case years of sacrifice are necessary in order to discover and acquire an awareness of them. The Russian Social Democrats instinctively thought in terms of repeating the Paris Commune in Petrograd; the Chinese Communists in terms of repeating the Russian October in the Canton of the twenties; and the Vietnamese comrades, a year after the foundation of their party, in terms of organizing insurrections of peasant soviets in the northern part of their country. It is now clear to us today that soviet-type insurrections could not triumph in prewar colonial Asia, but it was precisely here that the most genuine Communist activists had to begin their apprenticeship for victory.

Debray's first observations concern armed self-defense, with the opening remark that "self-defense as a system and as a reality has been liquidated by the march of events." This liquidation, according to Debray, marked the end of an epoch and "the death of a certain ideology."

The end of the epoch was brought about by "the new context of struggle to the death, (where) there is no place for spurious solutions, no place for the pursuit of an equilibrium between oligarchic and popular forces through tacit non-aggression pacts." The ideological foundations for self-defense, which meet their death along with the death of the system, are "economism" and "spontaneity."

"Economism" has many manifestations, but Debray tends to confine it to the exclusive defense by workers/peasants of job and territorial interests, against the encroachments of factory owners and the state, but without going over to the attack against the state itself. Therefore, "such a defense in effect accepts and guarantees that which it claims to combat."

"Spontaneity," too, has many manifestations, but here it is confined essentially to an "armed spontaneity...leading anywhere except to the conquest of political (state) power."

The system of armed self-defense dealt with by Debray can be defined essentially as the existence of a portion of territory "defended" by a section of an oppressed people, and where the oppressive state and its army can't proceed "to the normal exercise of their functions," but at the same time, they aren't threatened at the base of their power.

Further, this system of self-defense: does not aim at military supremacy for the masses, by the formation of an armed force, separate from the oppressed population and with its own mobility and initiative; armed actions engaged in by the self-defense force are always localized, as opposed to a revolutionary guerrilla war which involves the entire country. With this system of self-defense, there is no initiative; the force is exposed to the enemy, dependent upon his good-will, and "permits the ruling class to conceal its true character as a dictatorship of violence." These "self-defense zones" are always - contrary to common belief - allowed to exist by the enemy and not truly created and maintained by the power of the people.

Debray presents a contrast: "In Vietnam above all, and also in China, armed self-defense of the peasants, organized in militias, has played an important role as the foundation stone of the structure of the armed forces of liberation - **but self-defense extended to zones already militarily liberated or semi-liberated** (my emphasis); in no way did it bring autonomous zones into being. These territories of self-defense were viable only because total war was being carried out on other fronts. ...They permitted the integration of the entire population into the war without resting the principal weight of the struggle upon it."

Debray also refers to Che Guevara: "Self-defense is nothing more than a small part of a whole, with special characteristics. It is never possible to conceive of a self-defense zone as complete in itself, i.e., as a region where the popular forces attempt to defend themselves against enemy attack while the entire zone remains free of disturbances."

Of course, Debray is speaking about the peasants of Peru, the miners of Colombia and Bolivia and other peoples in certain Latin American countries who have witnessed the death of "armed self-defense," backward ideology and particular forms of organization. But, can We learn anything from their experience? Can We use some of the lessons here in analyzing our own past and present experience so that We can have fewer obstacles in our path?

"A self-defense zone when it is neither the result of a total or partial military defeat of enemy forces, nor protected by a guerrilla front constantly on the offensive, is no more than a colossus with feet

of clay. Its collapse deals a blow to the morale of the popular forces all the more serious and unexpected because this type of status quo appears to be unalterable; a euphoric mythology develops and envelops the reality of these zones;...it is forgotten that they are the fruit of a tacit compromise, not of a real victory...On the revolutionary side these territories, presumably liberated, are converted into a simple object of political propaganda - alibis for inaction rather than incitations to greater action. On the side of reaction, they provide ready-made justification for posing as guardians of national unity and territorial integrity threatened by this cancerous growth, and for attacking the communist 'separatists.' For propaganda reasons, the bourgeoisie little by little inflates the real danger and the fear it feels, an inflation which can deceive the revolutionaries themselves, eventually persuading them that the (self-defense) guerrilla force is really a cancer, and that time alone will finish off the patient. Thus, the 'subsiding of the swelling,' when the army passes over to the attack after long preparations made at its leisure, will have a major effect" - a great victory for those who rule, a great defeat for those who seek independence.

(Does the above paragraph remind you in any way of the rise and fall of the BPP; the strategy and tactics of the state?)

Trying to learn from the experiences of others, and beginning to glean lessons from our own experience, should take us into such things as an analysis of the "maroon societies" - the early New Afrikan communities begun by "fugitive slaves" on the National Territory and surrounding areas - established as early as mid-17th century. The claims of sovereignty We make today, the ideology and theory, strategy, and calls for self-defense cadres, all have unbroken links to these early examples of our efforts to break the chains. Did such efforts represent nothing more than "a colossus with feet of clay"? If so, why? And what, if anything, can We learn from them which can aid our present efforts?

When the u.s. sheriffs came to take back the land in the 1860's and 1870's, although We "picked up the gun," why did We fail? Why did Robert Williams end up in Cuba and the call go out to "go underground" rather than "mount an offensive"? What are the lessons learned from the BPP for Self-Defense?

"Economism" and "Spontaneity"....

Lenin expressed the fundamental political tendency of "economism" as: let the workers carry on the economic struggle, while the "intellectuals" and political leaders merge with the liberals to carry on the political struggle. "Strikingly similar to a line which says: let the prisoners and the 'army' carry on the prison and armed struggle, while...) Lenin also pointed out that "economists" had a resentment for the raising of broad political questions which began "controversy," and resentment for anyone who put forth "plans" for organizing the movement. "Economists" also ignored theoretical work and struggle with other tendencies, although theoretical questions constantly occupied the minds of the masses, cadres and leadership. He emphasized one aspect of the importance of theoretical development and struggle by pointing to the movement's early phase, which saw the spontaneous development of the movement, many new people attracted to it because of its practical

appeal and successes, but there was a corresponding lowering of the theoretical level of the movement.

It was in this context that Lenin put forth: Without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement. The importance of theory for the movement was enhanced by three factors:

1) both the party and the movement were in the early stages of the process of formation, and their distinguishing features were not yet clearly defined. Neither had they "settled accounts" with other trends of revolutionary thought which threatened to divert the movement from its revolutionary path. "Under these circumstances, what at first sight appears to be an "unimportant" error may lead to most deplorable consequences, and only short-sighted people can consider factional disputes and a strict differentiation between shades of opinion inopportune or superfluous. The fate of (the party and movement) for very many years to come may depend on the strengthening of one or the other 'shade'."

2) the movement is in essence an international one, and can succeed only if it makes use of the experiences of others. While these international experiences weren't to be "imported," they were to be studied, treated critically, and tested independently.

3) the role of the vanguard can be fulfilled only by an organized body that is guided by the most advanced theory.

Lenin also defined the essential feature of "spontaneity" as opportunism, characterized by lack of principles, eclecticism, and lack of consciousness, initiative, and the failure to establish an organization that was "constant and continuous" and capable of leading the whole movement.

The tasks of those who sought to combat these backward forms of "struggle" were: to take up ideological and theoretical struggle, without which no growth of the movement is possible; to combat all lines which pervert the minds of the masses; to oppose confusion and vacillation in practical areas of struggle; to expose and repudiate all conscious and unconscious attempts to degrade the goals, strategy and tactics of the movement.

The ideological foundations of the system of self-defense must be seen as critical, because they are the foundations not only for this system, but for all forms of struggle and all forms of organization utilized by forces harmful to the struggle. "Economism" and "spontaneity" have a variety of forms which appear upon the stages of all revolutionary struggles, and though the same in essence, they vary according to the concrete conditions in each historical and national setting.

We would be short-sighted if we didn't recognize that even now, as our Movement is gaining renewed strength, that it also is confronted with its own peculiar forms of "economism" and "spontaneity," and that we must use every opportunity to combat these negative expressions.

In **Basic Tenets of Revolutionary Black Nationalism**, We find the following:

...Out of movement circles come questions like: Why did the Black revolution of 1967-1968 fail? Because We did not take into account all the materialist factors of revolutionary warfare and because We were still operating under the illusion of instant or 90-day revolution. When We say We failed to take into account the materialist factors, We had not made the necessary preparations to make people's war successful. Also, We only led an advanced section of our people, not taking into account the objective materialist reality of the overwhelming majority of our people.

Why did this happen?

Because We were young and immature as revolutionaries and inexperienced in fighting a revolutionary war. In essence We moved too fast, with too few. We attempted to organize too many without taking into account what resources We had or where We were going to get them from to sustain the action once carried out. Therefore, when the party was attacked, it was unable to consolidate its ranks; the party had not adequately prepared cadre through ideological training to know what to do in crisis situations, how to function independently, how to change tactics and how to re-unite with the revolutionary center when it is forced to move.

It seems that the underlying reason for the "failure" dealt with above is that We "bowed to spontaneity" -- We had no sufficient ideology, theory of struggle, political line and strategy suited to the concrete situation; our forms of organization were inadequate as a result of our insufficiency in these other areas. This is the bottom line.

Before going further, let's make two final references to Lenin, one of which deals with a failure on the part of his movement, and the other to the tasks of revolutionaries in achieving and maintaining the strength of their ideology and, consequently, their movement.

"The failure of the enterprise (the establishment of a newspaper) merely showed that the Social-Democrats of that period were unable to meet the immediate requirements of the time owing to their lack of revolutionary experience and practical training...But in order to profit from the experience of that movement, and to draw practical lessons from it, we must thoroughly understand the causes and significance of this or that shortcoming...Lack of training of the majority of the revolutionaries, an entirely natural phenomenon, could not have roused any particular fears. Once the tasks were correctly defined, once the energy existed for repeated attempts to fulfill them, temporary failures represented only part misfortune. Revolutionary experience and organizational skill are things that can be acquired, provided the desire is there to acquire them, provided the shortcomings are recognized, which in revolutionary activity is more than half-way towards their removal. But what was only part misfortune became full misfortune when this consciousness began to grow dim...when there appeared people -- and even Social-Democratic organs -- that were

prepared to regard shortcomings as virtues, that even tried to invent a theoretical basis for their slavish cringing before spontaneity..."

"...(B)ourgeois ideology is far older in origin than socialist ideology, that it is more fully developed, and that it has at its disposal immeasurable more means of dissemination. And the younger the socialist movement in any given country, the more vigorously it must struggle against all attempts to entrench non-socialist ideology, and the more resolutely the workers must be warned against the bad counsellors...Yes, our movement is indeed in its infancy, and in order that it may grow up faster, it must become imbued with intolerance against those who retard its growth by their subservience to spontaneity. (Spontaneity ultimately serves to reinforce bourgeois ideology.) Nothing is so ridiculous and harmful as pretending that we are 'old hands' who have long ago experienced all the decisive stages of the struggle."

As We enter a new decade of struggle, We not only must consider the viability of certain conceptions of "self-defense" suited to our conditions, but We still are concerned with questions of conscious planning on **all** levels of struggle. We are concerned with avoiding the pitfalls of petty-bourgeois reform, and spontaneity. We are concerned with "materialist forces of revolutionary warfare," and with how not to move "too fast with too few." We're concerned with having a sufficient degree of consolidation **before** the next "open" attack by the enemy, so that the Movement loses none of its dynamism and continuity, and the scattering of our ranks is kept to a minimum. We wanna take a few steps forward, without taking any steps backward.

It seems to us that our "re-visit" with Debray can aid us in examining our practice of "self-defense" in several ways.

Debray points out that the system of self-defense he examined was ended by the "new context of struggle," by the end of one epoch and the beginning of another -- that of a total war which excludes compromise solutions and shared power with the enemy; a revolutionary people's war with the conscious aim of national independence.

It would seem, then, that the development of a system of self-defense for New Afrikans must take into account the extent to which the system would imply acceptance of u.s. legitimacy over New Afrikan people. To what extent, if any, would practice of self-defense endanger u.s. power bases and the legitimacy over New Afrikan people? To what extent, if any, would the practice of self-defense raise the political understanding of our people regarding our need for independent state power? How do We incorporate into the self-defense system elements which raise consciousness and build practical foundations to support an offensive war? How do We ensure that the system of self-defense becomes a national system, and is clearly linked to the struggle for national liberation and not vulgarized so that it becomes a reactionary tool in the "war against crime"?

The questions are in many ways related to the battle against "economism" and "spontaneity," and to the subject of the next section on armed propaganda. But, We end this section on this note:

The protection of the population depends on the progressive destruction of the enemy's military potential. It is relative to the overall balance of forces: the populace will be completely safe when the opposing forces are completely defeated.

Allowing oneself to be attacked or limiting oneself to passive defense is to place oneself in the position of being unable to protect the population and to expose one's own forces to attrition. On the other hand, to seek for ways to attack the enemy is to put him on the permanent defensive, to exhaust him and prevent him from expanding his activities, to wrest the initiative from him, and to impede his search operations. Here we have the best way to fulfill our glorious mission of protecting the population.

II

In the chapter on "Armed Propaganda," Debray moves to show how and why this form of struggle in Latin America differed from conceptions applied in places such as Vietnam and China.

In the 1960's and early 1970's, many bloods in the u.s. picked up this book, and, when finished, they would more than likely conceive "armed propaganda" in accord with the following: "...armed propaganda follows military action but does not precede it. Armed propaganda has more to do with the internal than with the external guerrilla front. The main point is that under present conditions the most important form of propaganda is successful military action."

As We said in the beginning, most of us mis-read Debray -- and others -- and began our practice with a one-sided understanding. We didn't even take time to read the title page of the book, which clearly informs us that its subject is armed struggle **and** political struggle in Latin America: two forms of struggle employed in revolutionary people's war, and, where one is weak, so is the other.

While misunderstanding the type of "armed propaganda" that Debray dealt with, and thinking that "the most important form of propaganda is successful military action" -- alone -- preceding "pure" propaganda, We not only tore several international experiences from their context, but, to paraphrase Debray, We developed a kind of biological interpretation of the military foco. We had an interpretation which spontaneously severed the armed action from political/mass work, and tied it to that of contagion, to spontaneous generation by the simple effect of contact, or, the miraculous effect of armed actions **alone** to agitate, educate and organize the masses of New Afrikan people, to prepare and mobilize them for revolutionary people's war.

Now, trying not to tear it from context, what is "armed propaganda" as dealt with by Debray? The first indication is obtained from the following:

The guerrilla struggle has political motives and goals. It must have the support of the masses or disappear; **before enlisting them directly**, it must convince them that there are valid reasons for its existence so that the "rebellion" will truly be -- by the manner of its **recruitment** and the **origins of its fighters** (all our emphasis) -- a "war of the people." In order to convince the masses, it is necessary to address them, that is, to address speeches, proclamations, explanations to them -- in brief, to carry on political work, "mass work." Hence the first nucleus of fighters will be divided into small propaganda patrols which will cover the mountain areas, going into villages, holding meetings, speaking here and there, in order to explain the social goals of the Revolution, to denounce the enemies of the peasantry, to promise agrarian reform and punishment of traitors, etc. If the peasants are skeptical, their confidence in themselves must be restored by imbuing them with revolutionary faith; faith in the revolutionaries who are speaking to them. Cells, public or underground, will be organized in the villages, union struggles will be supported or initiated; and the program of the Revolution will be reiterated again and again. It is only at the end of this stage, having achieved active support by the masses, a solid rearguard, regular provisioning, a broad intelligence network, rapid mail service, and a recruiting center, that the guerrillas can pass over to direct action against the enemy. Such, it seems, is the line of **armed propaganda**.

We have emphasized "before enlisting them directly," "recruitment," and "origins of its fighters" because these give us our first indications of the meaning and purpose "armed propaganda within the context used by Debray. Further on in the chapter, he points out that, "In Vietnam, armed propaganda, linked directly to the organization of rural self-defense groups," played a decisive role in the war against the French.

Also, "In order to give substance and shape to the liberation army, the Party in 1944 created the 'Propaganda Section of the Liberation Army,' (which is not entirely true, as We'll see later) In this way the Party organized a nucleus of (additional) revolutionary cadres...Subsequently, this nucleus spread throughout the country to form people's militias and irregular guerrilla units. Its goal was not to fight but to establish fighting units."

Still further, We find that "Armed propaganda, at least if it is geared to combat, seeks precisely to organize regular units or to expand existing units, by means of 'political recruiting.'"

Based on the above, We have a more clear meaning of "armed propaganda" as understood and practiced in other countries, and in certain countries in Latin America prior to the "new context of struggle," and, it has more to do with mass political work and

recruitment than with the miraculous power of the "purely military" foco. To this conception, Debray presents a contrast:

...The destruction of a troop transport truck or the public execution of a police torturer is more effective propaganda for the local population than a hundred speeches. Such conduct convinces them of the essential: that the Revolution is on the march, that the enemy is no longer invulnerable. It convinces them, to begin with, that the soldier is an enemy -- their enemy -- and that a war is under way, the progress of which is dependent on their daily activities. Afterwards, speeches may be made and will be heeded. In the process of such raids the fighters collect arms, reduce the enemy's military potential, acquire experience, demoralize enemy troops, and renew the hopes of militants throughout the country. The agitational and propagandistic impact resides in this very concentration of effects. A significant detail: During two years of warfare, Fidel did not hold a single political rally in his zone of operations.

In other words, armed propaganda follows military action but does not precede it...The most important form of propaganda is successful military action.

How did Debray arrive at this conclusion? He began by using the examples of the Vietnamese experience, although he doesn't give us enough details of that experience.

When Debray tells us that it is only at the "end" of the stage of mass work that the pass-over is made to direct action against the enemy, and then immediately follows this by citing the experience of the Vietnamese as supporting this conception, he contributes to the misunderstandings that many of his readers come away with. He gives us some "external detail," but not enough "inner content." Some of us may come away with the impression that it was after the "Propaganda Section" had fulfilled its task that the direct action stage was initiated in Vietnam. This makes it easy to overlook the fact that the "Propaganda Section" became part of an already existing army which had seen military action, and that the tasks of this Section were strategic in nature.

When the Vietnamese Communist Party (now the Vietnamese Workers Party) was formed in 1930, armed struggle was already accepted as the strategic line of liberation. In September of 1940, a spontaneous uprising began in Bac Son, and Phung Chi Kien was later assigned the task of re-organizing guerrillas who had been involved in this uprising into the Army of National Salvation, which was officially founded along with the Vietminh Front in mid-1941. Other cadres who were instrumental in the formation of the first military units of the Vietminh were cadres who had been part of a political course taught by Ho Chi Minh in China during the truce between the CCP and the Kuomintang.

Between the formation of the Army of National Salvation and the formation of the "Propaganda Section" (Armed Propaganda and Liberation Detachments) in December 1944, many military engagements had taken

place. The "Propaganda Section" was formed as part of a long-range plan to initiate a "general insurrection," and the primary tasks of this unit were to make the objectives of the Vietminh known to the masses, to establish secure lines of communication throughout the country, and "to establish fighting units." In April of 1945, the "Propaganda Section" and the Army of National Salvation were merged and became the Liberation Army.

It's against this background that Debray then points out the peculiar conditions which allow "armed propaganda" to become part of the successful Vietnamese experience:

1) the high density of the peasant population, the overpopulation of the villages and towns, and the marked predominance of the peasantry over the urban population permit revolutionary propagandists to mingle easily with the people, "like fish in water." It was the same in China. Such propagandists pass all the more unobserved because the enemy is an occupier.

2) the propagandists are linked either with the bases of revolutionary support or with a people's army capable of backing them up or protecting them in their activities. Most important, they attest to the tangible and visible reality of military victories...to existing combat units...Vietnamese armed propaganda has thus developed within the framework of a war of national liberation, of a real war, being carried out everywhere and in all ways, by an established regular army against a foreign enemy.

In contrast, Debray asserts the situation in many Latin American countries was that:

1) the guerrilla focos, when they first begin their activity, are located in regions of highly dispersed and relatively sparse populations.

2) the occupation and control of rural areas by reaction or indirectly by imperialism, their vigilance today greatly increased, should rid a given group of armed propagandists of all hope of remaining unnoticed, "like fish in water." The armed unit and the people's vanguard are not dealing with a foreign expeditionary force, with limited manpower, but with a well-established system of local domination. They themselves are the foreigners, lacking status, who at the beginning can offer the populace nothing but bloodshed and pain.

3) imperialism and its agents are hiding their repressive nature behind the guise of social and technical assistance, and other forms of "progress," "aid" and agencies such as the Peace Corps, whose work is made easy by the lack of political work by left-wing organizations.

4) lastly, the absence of organized regular or semi-regular revolutionary forces.

Debray's position is that many Latin American revolutionaries had combined their lack of experience in struggling under their own concrete conditions, with taking the experiences of others out of context. To a great extent, We made similar mistakes in the '60's and early '70's. Unfortunately, there are many indications that We haven't yet learned the many valuable lessons from our own experiences, and also haven't yet learned to correctly analyze the experiences of others.

One of the outstanding lessons here is that both "armed self-defense" and "armed propaganda" require, for their success, the existence of a strategic, constantly offensive guerrilla front. While admitting the interrelationship between military and political forms of struggle, the strategic impact of military forms flows from the fact that political forms of struggle have certain limitations. the ability of political forms of struggle to arouse and organize significant numbers of people depends greatly upon a dialectical relation with various forms of violence and subversion on the part of the enemy. To the degree to which political forms of struggle can translate themselves into mass movements depends upon the initiation and continuing growth of military struggle. It is military forms of struggle which catalyze and expand the movement, keeping the movement alive when other forms of struggle suffer periods of stagnation and repression.

The crux of the situation in Latin America was that such a strategic conception of armed forms of struggle was not held by the "political leaders." Debray attempted to point out **not** that "armed struggle" alone could meet all the requirements of the total revolutionary process, but that those who were capable of dealing with this conception must also fight to impose a political line upon the movement which was in accord with objective and subjective reality, and/or assume total leadership of the movement -- total political-military leadership.

(It's clear that Debray concentrated on the struggles which had their center in the rural areas, and it's our belief that while We can learn a few valuable lessons from his work, most of what We can learn from the Latin American experience concerns those struggles which have a primarily urban base. We will examine such experiences in forthcoming parts of this series.)

III

In the chapter "The party and the guerrilla," We're told how "In many countries of (Latin) America the guerrilla force has frequently been called the 'armed fist' of a liberation front, in order to indicate its dependence on a patriotic front or on a party," and that such an expression has been "copied from models elaborated elsewhere -- principally in Asia."

Next, Debray sketches the military errors that derive from "subordinating the armed force tactically and strategically to a party that has not changed its organizational form and activities to suit the conditions of a revolutionary People's War."

The first of these errors, according to Debray, is when the persons responsible for military activity must "descend to the city" to consult with the political leadership. Whether or not the military commander is a member of the Central Committee of the party, she/he must participate in decisions and be advised of political positions; the commander must advise the political leaders of the material and political problems confronted by the guerrilla force, must request aid, and sometimes "simply remind a forgetful leadership of the very existence of (the guerrilla force)."

The presence of the military commander in the city is very dangerous: he/she is the most feared by the enemy, and her/his absence from the base has a bad effect on the morale of the other guerrillas. Thus, Debray asserts the necessity for those political leaders in the city to make the trip up to the mountains for discussions, "which presupposes, in the first place, recognition of (the military commanders') role as responsible leader, the willingness to give (him/her) the resources with which to exercise (her/his) leadership -- if not (he/she) takes them...It implies above all, the adoption of an open and explicit strategy: What is the fundamental form of class struggle at a given moment? What is its basic terrain? Its principal objective?"

(While We don't have the "mountain/city" situation, We do have the existence of a situation similar to that described.)

The second error pointed to by Debray in this regard involves how "the lack of political power leads to logistical and military dependence of the mountain forces on the city."

The subordination of the guerrilla force to urban political leadership not only creates practical problems for the guerrillas but also a sense of dependence and an inferiority complex. They must wait for everything from the outside world: their political cadres, their guidelines, money, arms, even the timetable of operations. They lose sight of the moral and political principle, to count on nothing but your own strength...

The terrible abandonment which many focos have suffered...is explained not so much by the hidden sabotage, indifference, or betrayal by the urban apparatus, as by an irreducible difference in conditions of living, therefore in thought and behavior. The best of comrades...fall prey to this difference, which is tantamount to "objective betrayal."

Many of them know it. When a guerrilla group communicates with city leadership or its representatives abroad, it is dealing with "its" bourgeoisie. Even if such a bourgeoisie is needed -- as an artificial lung is needed in moments of asphyxia -- this difference of interests and milieu must not be lost sight of. The two worlds do not breathe the same air. Fidel Castro had this experience and did not hesitate, even at the risk of being left alone during very difficult moments, to repudiate "his" bourgeoisie, which was given to making unprincipled alliances. For example, when he condemned the Miami Pact in his admirable letter of December 14, 1957, in which, confronted by a bourgeois policy, a proletarian morality was already being defined and incarnated by the Rebel Army -- a morality which was later to reveal itself as also a proletarian policy.

According to Debray, the guerrillas suffer a logistical dependence upon the political wing of the organization, which is "taking advantage of the prestige generated by the very existence of these guerrilla fronts, even when isolated and short of combat equipment." As for the military dependence: "Military operations cannot be planned months in advance, for a given day, in accord with the national political calendar established by the ruling class...It is very clear that campaign plans must be elaborated by those who must carry them out either alone or in collaboration with a political leadership that has a profound, detailed, tactical knowledge of military questions. But a political leadership without this knowledge cannot elaborate military plans on its own, according to its own convenience, as support for a policy of maneuvering or of bringing pressure against the bourgeois regime..."

The third error involves the lack of a single command. "This entails the lack of a general plan of action; it is not possible to combine and coordinate the available means and gear them to a main direction of action...The Front and the Party have two arms, one the military and the other legal and peaceful. How to combine the action of the two?"

Debray puts forth that a centralized executive leadership -- a political/military leadership -- is required to avoid a situation in which "the force of tradition, the deep-rooted adherence to forms of organization fixed and hallowed by time, prevents the dissolution of an established structure and the passage to a new form of struggle required by the war situation...In every case attempts will be made to enjoy the advantages of all forms of struggle without the drawbacks of any, to refuse to select one form of struggle as fundamental and another as a subordinate. Each arm will be left to wave independently of the other, each on its own responsibility, without coordinated action or a system of priorities. This abstract policy, reformist or disoriented, converts the revolutionary movement into a disjointed marionette."

Further, and more specifically, the absence of a single unified political/military command for the movement leads to three very dangerous situations.

First, "In the absence of a single command, there is no clear strategy of armed struggle. In the absence of a clear strategy, no plan of action. The guerrilla groups are cut off from the cities; each one acts on its own. The urban forces or those who act for them are not

clearly subordinate to the Sierra; for this, it would be necessary to recognize the guerrilla force as the directive wing and motive force of the movement. The results are independent and anarchic actions in the city which can jeopardize not only the guerrillas' plans but also the very significance of the battle undertaken."

(It should be noted that by "strategy of armed struggle," a total strategy is meant, i.e., a strategy involving the use of all forms of struggle, of all forces -- political and military -- available to the movement. "Armed struggle" is not a "purely military" phenomenon.)

Such a situation leads to unequal development in manpower and quality between the two wings, and "The tactical conflicts that are bound to arise, the differences in evaluation and line, conceal a class conflict, in which the interests of the proletariat are not, paradoxically enough, on the side which one would expect."

Secondly, in order to avoid recognizing already-existing guerrilla forces not only as the directive wing and motive force of the movement, but simply as "equals" whose political perspectives and practice offer the opportunity for consolidation, parties often resort to creating their own guerrilla forces.

"The lack of a single leadership of the armed struggle, truly authoritative and influential, provokes the dispersion of fronts and this dispersion in turn delays the advent of a single leadership. This delay can be deliberate; that is, new guerrilla fronts can be created in order to hinder the establishment of a single leadership. But in this case, it is more a matter of accumulating reserves to be used after victory rather than of active guerrilla fronts. They are not intended to wage war but to maintain a reserve of political personnel and to make propaganda for their promoters. To have a guerrilla force gives prestige. It makes it possible to raise one's voice and to impose oneself of the stage of power. Simple rivalry among competing organizations or a petty bourgeois sentiment of frustration in the face of an established vanguard can thus lead to an ineffectual dispersion of the rural guerrillas."

In contrast, Debray points to the example of Cuba, where the guerrilla force began a harmonious development from a single central nucleus and then split once it became too large. "The advantage of this progression from smaller to larger, which is deceptively simple and apparently effortless, is that it proclaims the simultaneous existence of an undisputed central command and a very great tactical freedom for its officers and columns. The stronger the central command and the more lucid and firm its strategy from the start, the greater will be the freedom of action and the tactical flexibility of its various fronts and columns. The concentration of resources and men in a single foco permits the elaboration of a single (political and) military doctrine, in the heat of the combats in which the men receive their training...Thus, little by little, officers are formed in a certain moral, political, and military school, officers in whom the high command, when the day comes, can confidently place the strategic leadership of a zone or front, without the need to control their actions. They are all trained together, in the same school, which inculcates in them a common spirit, tactical rules, and a step-by-step political and military plan of action."

Thirdly, "The lack of unity in the command unleashes an infinite number of compensatory mechanisms. One of the favorites is promoting a

national front, to which will officially be entrusted the armed sector. Considerable energy is thrown into the establishment of a phantom front, composed essentially of the members of the party that have formed it. Since one party does not make a front, organizations are fabricated out of whole cloth, at the expense of the party itself, and famous progressive 'independent personalities' are sought out whose names can be whispered, adding to their mystery...All this beautiful artificial machinery absorbs attention and thus provides excuses for not putting into operation the instrument for achieving it -- the people's army, which alone can give historical significance and effectiveness to a political front."

Debray puts forth that a national revolutionary front must be created around something constant -- the guerrilla force -- and that as this force develops and wins victories, it will permit the creation of a national revolutionary front.

Debray also warns that, the weaker the guerrilla force, the more it must mistrust alliances; the stronger it is, the more it can permit itself to make alliances, so long as it does so from a position of political strength, continues to adhere to principles, and struggles against "unprincipled unity at any price."

To some, this may seem a sectarian stand, to which Debray responds: "This conception would be sectarian if it were only a matter of keeping the resolute purity and clear conscience of the armed nucleus, but not if it is a question of a dynamic nucleus, conceived of as the generative force and leader of an unremitting offensive war."

A related question develops -- one which we find repeated in a similar fashion within our own Movement. For us, it involves the "tactical" vs. the strategic role of the armed apparatus. Debray presents us with the example of how the Cuban revolutionary forces began to win over Batista troops by inviting them to talk. "To accept talks is already to waiver; and the more attacks they were subjected to, the more the enemy officers responded to the messages from the rebel command."

But, "Psychological warfare is effective only if it is introduced into war itself. If military pressure is eased even briefly, political pressure on the adversary immediately lacks a point of support and falls into a void." Thus, it seems, the use of armed force is essentially a constant, rather than occasional factor of armed political struggle.

Debray next points out two other problems which arise from the absence of a single political/military leadership, both of which are of considerable interest to us. The first is that "No political front which is basically a deliberative body can assume leadership of a people's war; only a technically capable executive group, centralized and united on the basis of identical class interests, can do so; in brief, only a revolutionary general staff. A national front (reformist or disoriented, lacking a simultaneously political and military leadership), heterogeneous by nature, is the scene of political wrangling, debates, endless deliberations, and temporary compromises; it can unite and exist only under conditions of imminent danger and in confrontation with an enemy. But even the method of confrontation will be based on the action of each component force, acting disconnectedly."

(It's necessary for us to stress that when such a front "can unite and exist only under conditions of imminent danger and in confrontation with an enemy," it is **subjective** factors we speak of primarily, i.e., it is the revolutionary initiative of the national liberation forces which

create the conditions of "imminent danger" by going over to the offensive; it is the consciously directed revolutionary action of the oppressed nation itself, which marks the confrontation with the enemy and allows such a front to unite and exist. This is why "even the method of confrontation will be based on the action of each component force...")

The second problem is exemplified by those who, according to Debray, "live in a double world, genuinely dualist...and deriving from a strongly idealist tradition: politics on one side, the military on the other. The people's war is considered to be a technique, practiced in the countryside and subordinated to the political line, which is conceived of as a supertechnique, 'purely' theoretical, 'purely' political." Those who live in this double world place labels such as "militarist" and "adventurist" upon those who feel that "people's war" and "mass armed struggle" encompass all forms of struggle; those who live in this dual world counterpose political line to military strategy, political leadership to military leadership.

"The phrase 'armed struggle' is brandished, repeated endlessly on paper, in programs, but the use of the phrase cannot conceal the fact that in many places the determination to carry out armed struggle and the positive definition of a corresponding strategy are still lacking. What do we mean by strategy? The differentiation between the primary and the secondary, from which comes a clear priority of tasks and functions. A happy pragmatism will permit all forms of struggle to drag on together, will let them come to an understanding among themselves. At one point, however, the negative definition of strategy may appear, in the form of a refusal: to the idea that under certain conditions peaceful forms of mass struggle must be subordinate to armed mass struggle has sometimes been opposed the idea that such a subordination would be equivalent to making the political line of the vanguard party dependent on military strategy, on the party's armed apparatus, and would subordinate party leadership to military leadership. In reality, this is not the case. Once more it has been forgotten, in spite of verbal acquiescence, that guerrilla warfare is essentially political, and that for this reason the political cannot be counterposed to the military."

Debray brings the chapter to an end and lays foundation for the next chapter on this note:

The parties or organizations whose political leaderships have operated in this fashion -- controlling their embryonic army from the outside, maintaining a duality of organization, removing their activists from the guerrilla force and sending them elsewhere for political training -- are basing themselves on hallowed principles of organization, apparently essential to Marxist theory, that is, on a distinction between the military and the political. They base themselves, furthermore, on an entire international range of experiences -- in the context of protracted people's wars, those of China and Vietnam. It may be that they apply these principles badly; the principles are not to be blamed for that. Are we not then confusing a political principle with a particular form of organization or a passing state of affairs within certain parties? Are we not repudiating by implication a

hallowed principle, that of the distinctiveness of the party and its predominance over the people's army in the phase preceding the seizure of power, on the fallacious pretext that the principle is badly applied? Or is the principle itself not valid for all latitudes? Let us examine the problem at its root.

IV

In "The principal lesson for the present," Debray presents us with the familiar question: between the party and army, which is most decisive? There is usually a standard response to this question, based on both theoretical and historical orthodoxy, which Debray questions.

1) The party must be strengthened, because it is the creator and directive nucleus of the army, and is the guarantor of a scientifically based political line.

"Now then, a class is represented by a political party, not by a military instrumentality. The proletariat is represented by that party which expresses its class ideology, Marxism-Leninism. Only the leadership of this party can scientifically defend its class interests.

"To the extent that it is a matter of intervening in the total social structure, it is necessary to have scientific knowledge of society in all its complexity, at all its levels (political, ideological, economic, etc.) and in its development...Only the workers' party, on the basis of a scientific understanding of the social structure and of existing conditions, can decide the slogans, the goals, and the alliances required at a given moment. In brief, the party determines the political content and the goal to be pursued, and the people's army is merely an instrument of implementation."

(What We see here is that the essence of the theoretical orthodoxy is not that the "party," i.e., a particular **structure**, must be strengthened, but that **a scientifically based political line is required**. We're concerned with practice, with what a "party" does. We're concerned with having an organized body of people, and whether We call this body a "party," an "army" or a "circus," the question is: Does it express the nation's ideology? Can it scientifically defend the nation's interest? Does it have a scientific knowledge of our society in all its complexity, at all its levels, and in its total development? Can it decide the slogans, goals, alliances required at a given moment? Can it determine the correct political content and the aims to be pursued? We are concerned with activity.)

2) "These principles have been applied up to now in the victorious struggles of our epoch, in the form of the separation between the political vanguard and the military instrumentality, with absolute supremacy of the former over the latter. In October, 1917, the Bolshevik Red Guards were subject to the orders of the Military Committee of the Party, which was in turn under the control of the Central Committee, whose directives it applied to the letter. It will be said that the example is not conclusive, since it refers to an urban workers'

insurrection, not a people's war. Let us, then, take as examples the socialist countries that have carried on a long people's war starting in the countryside. It is in China and Vietnam that this subordination is thrown into sharpest relief. We know how, in China, the principle of 'politics directs the gun' (Mao) is expressed in reality through the vigilant leadership of the army by the party. In Vietnam, Giap writes: 'The first fundamental principle in the building of our army is the imperative necessity of placing the army under Party leadership, of constantly strengthening Party leadership. The Party is the founder, the organizer, and the educator of the army. Only its exclusive leadership can permit the army to hew to a class line, to maintain its political orientation, and to fulfill its revolutionary tasks.'

Thus, We have the theoretical and historical orthodoxy. To these, Debray -- and history -- responds that Cuba (and other countries) have produced a different situation.

In Cuba, the military and political leadership were combined in one man, who felt that the Revolution is made by "the people, the revolutionaries, with or without a party." The principle was put forth that the revolution requires a **vanguard**, and that there is "no metaphysical equation in which vanguard = Marxist-Leninist party; there are merely dialectical conjunctions between a given function -- that of the vanguard in history -- and a given form of organization -- that of the Marxist-Leninist party. These conjunctions arise out of prior history and depend on it. Parties exist here on earth and are subject to the rigors of terrestrial dialectics. If they have been born, they can die and be reborn in other forms. How does this rebirth come about? Under what form can the historic vanguard reappear?"

Debray begins to present an answer to these questions by examining the conditions of China and Vietnam, since he holds that it was a particular set of concrete conditions in these countries which allowed for "the application of the traditional formula for party and guerrilla relationships."

(In the future, We will check other aspects of the Chinese and Vietnamese situations not covered by Debray, which We think had a great bearing on the development of their party/army relationships. We will also follow the development of other countries and their struggles and compare them, especially as they apply to urban, highly industrialized situations.)

Briefly, Debray points to three "historic conditions":

1) The Chinese and Vietnamese parties were involved from the beginning with the problem of establishing revolutionary people's power;

2) International contradictions placed both the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions at the head of popular resistance to foreign imperialism (the anti-Japanese war in China and the anti-French and Amerikkkan wars in Vietnam);

3) The Chinese and Vietnamese military forces were "transformed into peasant armies under the leadership of the party of the working class. They achieved in **practice** the alliance of the majority class and the **vanguard class**: the worker-peasant alliance."

The historic circumstances in Latin America didn't permit the parties there to take root and develop in the same way as those in China

and Vietnam. "They have not, since their founding, lived through the experience of winning power in the way the Chinese and Vietnamese parties have; they have not had the opportunity, existing as they do in countries possessing formal political independence, of leading a war of national liberation; and they have therefore not been able to achieve the worker-peasant alliance -- an interrelated aggregation of limitations arising from shared historical conditions. The natural result of this history is a certain structure of directive bodies and of the parties themselves, adapted to the circumstances in which they were born and grew."

It was due to this particular set of circumstances that the Cuban Revolution upset the old perspectives:

A revolutionary armed struggle, wherever it exists or is in preparation, requires a thoroughgoing transformation of peacetime practices. War, as we know, is an extension of politics, but with specific procedures and methods. The effective leadership of an armed revolutionary struggle requires a new style of leadership, a new method of organization, and new physical and ideological responses on the part of leaders and militants.

1) **The new style of leadership:** the war must be directed from inside the country, not from the outside; the leaders must share the risks of the war and must leave the city and join the guerrillas, which is first of all a security measure designed to assure the leaders' survival.

2) **The new style of organization:** puts an end to the "plethora of commissions, secretariats, congresses, conferences, plenary sessions, meetings, and assemblies at all levels -- national, provincial, regional and local. Faced with a state of emergency and a militarily organized enemy, such a mechanism is paralyzing at best, catastrophic at worst. It is the cause of excessive deliberation...which hampers executive, centralized, and vertical methods, combined with the large measure of tactical independence of subordinate groups which is demanded in the conduct of military operations.

"This reconstitution requires the temporary suspension of 'internal' party democracy and the temporary abolition of the principles of democratic centralism which guarantee it. While remaining voluntary and deliberate, more so than ever, party discipline becomes military discipline. Once the situation is analyzed, democratic centralism helps to determine a line and to elect a general staff, after which it should be suspended in order to put the line into effect. The subordinate units go their separate ways and reduce their contact with the leadership to a minimum, according to traditional rules for underground work; in pursuance of the general line they utilize to the best of their ability the greatest margin for initiative granted to them."

3) **The new ideological responses:** "Certain behavior patterns become inappropriate under conditions of an objective state of war: the basing of an entire political line on existing contradictions between enemy classes or between groups with differing interests within the same bourgeois social class; the consequent obsessive pursuit of alliances

with one or another fraction of the bourgeoisie, of political bargaining, and of electoral maneuvers, from which the ruling classes have so far reaped all the benefits; the safeguarding of unity at any price, regardless of revolutionary principles and interests, which has gradually turned the party and its survival in a given form into an end in itself, more sacred even than the Revolution; the siege fever, heritage of the past, and its accompanying mistrust, arrogance, rigidity and fitfulness."

With this as an answer to the first question -- How does the rebirth of the vanguard come about? -- its now necessary to answer the second question: How to overcome these deficiencies and allow the parties to resume their vanguard function, including guerrilla warfare? Is it by their own political work on themselves, or is some other form of education historically necessary?

While everyone agrees that the guerrilla force is not an end in itself, but a means of seizing power, We find those who seek to simply use the armed force as a form of pressure and a factor in political horsetrading, Therefore:

...after a period of marking time, the guerrillas turned away from and rejected these goals imposed from outside and assumed their own political leadership...which was the only way to resolve the contradictions and to develop militarily. Let it be noted that no part of the guerrilla movement has attempted to organize a new party; it seeks rather to wipe out doctrinal or party divisions among its own combatants. The unifying factors are the war and its immediate political objectives. The guerrilla movement begins by creating unity within itself around the most urgent military tasks, which have already become political tasks, a unity of non-party elements and of all the parties represented among the guerrillas. The most decisive political choice is membership in the guerrilla forces...Thus gradually this small army creates rank-and-file unity among all parties, as it grows and wins its first victories. Eventually, the future People's Army will beget the party of which it is to be, theoretically, the instrument: essentially the party is the army.

Is this situation exceptional only to Cuba? "On the contrary, recent developments in countries that are in the vanguard of the armed struggle on the continent confirm and reinforce it. It is reinforced because, whereas the ideology of the Cuban Rebel Army was not Marxist, the ideology of the new guerrilla commands is clearly so, just as the revolution which is their goal is clearly socialist and proletarian. It is precisely because their line is so clear and their determination is so unalterable that they have had to separate themselves, at a certain point, from the existing vanguard parties and propose...or impose...their own political, ideological, and organizational ideas as the foundation of any possible agreement, on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. In sum, it was necessary...to discontinue all organic dependence on political parties and to replace these enfeebled political vanguards."

Because the guerrillas assume their own political leadership, they end the divorce between theory and practice. It is only in this way that the guerrillas are allowed to develop on the military level. They then demonstrate the advantages of the "marriage" by politically assembling the masses around them.

The guerrilla force coordinates all forms of military struggle, and begins to make themselves felt in the lives of the masses. One of the means used is the radio, through which the guerrillas have daily contact with the people, who "receive political instructions and orientation which, as military successes increase, find an ever-increasing echo." This confirms the guerrilla force as the directive force of the struggle, and it is this source to which the masses turn for reliable information and political direction. "Clandestinity became public. As revolutionary methods and goals became more radical, so did the people."

Debray brings this chapter to a close with a summation: "To consider the existing party as different from and superior to the new type of party that grows along with the guerrilla force leads logically to two attitudes": 1) that the guerrilla force should be subordinate to the party, which assumes that the guerrilla force is incapable of leading itself and of following a correct, scientifically based, political path; 2) that the guerrilla force should be an imitation of the party, with emphasis on imitation of the party's democratist methods.

V

Finally, Debray brings us to "Some consequences for the future," i.e., consequences of this new conception of guerrilla warfare which has upset old perspectives.

1) "One must go from the military **foco** (i.e., armed units with political capacities) to the political movement -- a natural extension of an essentially political armed struggle."

This move seeks to avoid situations in which the political organization becomes an end in itself, fearful of initiating mass armed struggle "because it must first wait until it establishes itself solidly as the party of the vanguard, even though in reality it cannot expect recognition of its vanguard status except through armed struggle."

Therefore, "it is useless to create antibodies in the heart of existing political organizations: the opportunist infection, far from being halted, will be aggravated, exacerbated...The creation of one more political "**foco**" mobilizes only the mobilized: a number of militants and a handful of old leaders are siphoned off from one party to another, subtle internal adjustments are made within the profession, but this does not result in raising the level of the class struggle; it even tends to lower the level since the struggle is not based on genuine positions...These changes do not interest the workers and peasants, who are in fact unaware of them; and they do not alarm the ruling class at all. Rather they localize the focus of infection...Antibodies must be created at the base, at the level of the masses, by offering them a real alternative within their reach. Only then will the existing political leaderships be changed."

2) One notices the appearance of "new" political formations, usually initiated by splits, which claim to "save" the movement and speed the realization of armed struggle, but in fact sabotage it. Debray refers to this as "fractionalism," and says that to condemn it "is not, then, to endorse one political leadership or one ideological position as against another; it is to condemn a method, a form of revolutionary struggle as being sterile and ineffective, dilatory and contradictory in its alleged goals. It is to point a warning finger at a dead-end street and to indicate a shortcut...Wherever an armed political vanguard exists, there is no longer a place for verbal-ideological relation to the revolution, nor for a certain type of polemic...Wherever imperialism is actually challenged, splinter groups are re-absorbed and revolutionaries unite on methods and objectives tied to the people's war."

3) "Marxist-Leninist parties which do not fulfill their revolutionary obligations must be prevented from setting themselves up as associations for the protection of threatened interests, thereby impeding the inevitable rise of new forms of organization and revolutionary action. By the name they bear and the ideology they proclaim, they occupy **de jure** the place of the popular vanguard; if they do not occupy it **de facto**, they must not be permitted to keep the post vacant. There is no exclusive ownership of the revolution."

The principle is put forth that "Without armed struggle there is no well-defined vanguard...If there is no established vanguard...it is

because all the left-wing organizations have equal claim to the post of vanguard."

If each force has such an equal claim to vanguard status, Debray asserts that a policy of active (front) relations would be among the logical choices these force could make. But, "It is very difficult for such a front to crystallize before the armed struggle, if it is to be a genuine revolutionary front and not an alliance set up for the duration of an election or a pact among bourgeois groups to recapture their lost power. The formation of a broad anti-imperialist front is realized through the people's war."

4) The struggle against imperialism is decisive, and all else is secondary. "If the armed struggle of the masses against imperialism is capable of creating by itself, in the long run, a vanguard capable of leading the peoples to socialism, it cannot define itself in terms of its relations to reformism or any other existing political organization, but fundamentally in terms of its relation to imperialism. To regulate the pace of its action by comparison with the inaction of the reformists is not only to lose time, it is to paralyze the decisive in the name of the secondary."

The best way to combat vacillation is to pass over to the attack on imperialism and its local agents -- colonialism and neo-colonialism. "...The armed revolutionary front is a must. Wherever the fighting has followed an ascending line, wherever the popular forces have responded to the emergency, they have moved onto the magnetic field of unity. Elsewhere they are scattered and weak. Events would seem to indicate the need to focus all efforts on the practical organization of the armed struggle with a view to achieving unity on the basis of Marxist-Leninist principles."

In closing, We want to emphasize: Political struggle and armed struggle go hand in hand; where one is weak, so is the other.

From One Generation To The Next,

Build To Win!
Free The Land!

Atiba Shanna
March, 15ADM